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Kunz, George Frederick

The projected museum of peaceful arts in the...

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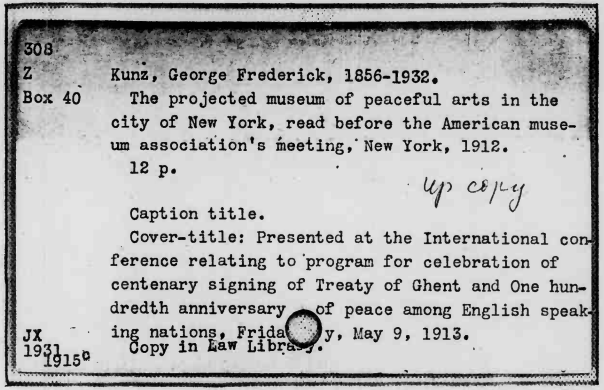

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The projected museum of peaceful arts in the city of New York, read before the American museum association's meeting, New York, 1912.
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PRESENTED

BY

DR. GEORGE FREDERICK KUNZ

AT THE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Relating to Program for Celebration of Centenary
Signing of Treaty of Ghent

and

One Hundredth Anniversary of Peace Among
English Speaking Nations

FRIDAY, MAY 9, 1913

NS Jan 29-17

THE PROJECTED MUSEUM OF PEACEFUL ARTS IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK[1]

By DR. GEORGE FREDERICK KUNZ

In view of the great interest manifested in many parts of the United States and England, as well as in Canada and other of the British colonies, in the proposed centennial celebration of peace among the English speaking peoples, there seems to be an assurance that at many points along our northern border bridges, buildings, monuments, and roads will be built, to remain as enduring evidences of the celebration. As chairman of the plan and scope committee charged with the consideration of the local celebration of this occasion, and realizing the great benefits secured during the Hudson-Fulton Celebration by the eminently successful coöperation of the various local museums and the park commission, entailing an outlay of less than thirty thousand dollars; realizing also the special needs of this, the greatest commercial and industrial city of the continent, for additional museums of various kinds, it has been my privilege to suggest the founding of a group of institutions to be known as "The Museums of the Peaceful Arts." Perhaps as many as fifteen to twenty such museums could be founded, modeled on the lines of such successful institutions as the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers of Paris, the Deutsches Museum in Munich, the Kunstgewerbe Museums of Carlsruhe, Berlin, and Vienna, and many others of a similar kind.

This would, of course, entail a very considerable outlay; let us suppose that the cost of such a group of museums should eventually amount to twenty, or even thirty million dollars. This expense could be borne in equal shares by the state, the city, and the committee. It is quite possible that public-spirited citizens would donate single buildings in connection with our present museums and our universities, especially as many of the museums here projected do not now exist in the United States.

Let us put down the annual running expenses of these proposed institutions at from two to three million dollars. This amounts to less than fifty cents for each inhabitant of our great city; but what will

[1] Read before the American Museum Association's Meeting, New York, 1912.

this investment mean for New York? It will furnish a thorough and effective education to our industrial workers, as well as to those who employ such workers in the many industries here represented. Moreover, facilities could be afforded to school children to assemble in the halls of the museums on one or two days in each year, under the care of competent expositors who would explain the various exhibits. In this way the children would be able to see what has actually been accomplished in the various departments of art and industry, the exhibits constituting object lessons of priceless value in illustration of the principles and facts recorded in text-books.

What if the expense of these foundations should equal that of one or two of our modern warships? We are to build one now at fifteen million dollars. The time may come when the bankers of the world, guided by the principle that war destroys the values upon which their investments are based and paralyzes the commerce and industry which provide the interest on these investments, will refuse to sell bonds for the purpose of furnishing money to carry on war, and in this case, as the *nervus belli* would be lacking, the expensive luxury of war would be rendered impossible. Today, a great and unceasing war is being waged between nation and nation, though not with soldiers or warships; the war of industry and commerce, a war which, however, creates values instead of destroying them. One of the most acute phases of this industrial and commercial struggle is observable at the present time in the fierce competition for the trade of South America, the Orient, and Africa. To whom will the palm of victory in this contest be awarded? Will the United States have a due share, or will the nations of Europe hold this field, more especially Germany, who has done and is doing everything to increase her industrial efficiency? It is true that America is coming to the fore, but she risks losing a good part of the fruits of her activities because the international commercial needs are not well studied or understood in this country. England in past generations has made similar mistakes; she has refused to see the rising clouds that menaced her supremacy, and her present labor troubles and the general restlessness among her workingmen are largely an outcome of this.

A German industrial undertaking will employ thirty—yes, even a hundred—trained chemists or other investigators if it is deemed necessary for success. A result of this policy is that Germany purchases four million dollars worth of coal tar from England, works it up in a great variety of ways, and is then able to market the product for

seventy millions. Again, she buys English wools and cottons; dyes them, weaves them, and then sells them to England and her colonies. This exemplifies what may be done with by-products, many of which were formerly regarded as of comparatively little value. Indeed, even now, nine-tenths of the coal gases and the coal tar distillations, of which Germany makes such extensive use, are wasted.

If England had given more attention to the industrial education of her people and to the utilization of many by-products which can be made an unsuspected source of wealth for a nation, so many of her workers would not be condemned to chronic lack of employment and under-nourishment. The progress in this direction might, indeed, have been at the expense of Germany, but that country, with its wonderful skill in opening up new sources of industrial profit, would only have been spurred on to renewed efforts and would have found means to more than make up for any loss sustained by English competition.

Why can we not take such lessons to heart? Here in the city of New York we are permitting 2,500,000 tons of food and human waste to go to the garbage heaps, to the sewers, and to pollute the rivers, at once spoiling a valuable source of food supply, and bringing disease to the inhabitants of the city, while if this material could be collected and spread over the barren fields of Long Island and New Jersey, these tracts might be turned into garden spots of the world. Furthermore, these same chemical products, after being turned into food and again into waste, could be utilized anew, thus constituting a kind of endless chain of usefulness.

In this connection we must bear in mind that our great agricultural product is now secured in most cases at the expense of the natural powers of the soil, and that we are using up the capital represented by these powers. As they become exhausted, the cost of securing and applying the necessary fertilizers will greatly raise the price of food for consumers. If, on the other hand, such fertilizing agents are not used, the product will correspondingly diminish and the price of food products will rise because of lack of an adequate supply for our rapidly increasing population.

This question of the preservation of waste materials has been very practically handled by the Russian government, which imposes an export tax upon every material that leaves an ash behind, if burned; this would apply to all food stuffs. Only alcohol is non-taxable, because here there is no ash residuum.

In museums of art and natural history this city is gathering material equal to any collected elsewhere in modern times; it is, however, in its agriculture, its mines, and its industries that the great wealth of this nation is proclaimed, and for the proper exposition of these there should be special museums devoted to the following branches:

Electricity.	Historic Records.
Steam.	Health and Hygiene.
Astronomy and Navigation.	Textiles.
Safety Appliances.	Ceramics and Clays.
Aviation.	Architecture.
Mechanical Arts.	Scenic Embellishment.
Agriculture.	Gardening.
Mining.	Roads and Road Building Materials.
Labor.	
Efficiency.	Commerce and Trade.
	Printing and Books.

One central library building could contain books and periodicals giving full information concerning the subjects covered by the various museums.

We have already a well organized safety museum, but without a building. The Hon. William Sulzer has clearly emphasized the great importance of such a museum, wherein could be shown the most approved appliances and methods for the protection of the workman that have been elaborated by the efforts of inventors, workmen, and employers acting in unison. The money is here for a nautical museum and the Chamber of Commerce is projecting a commercial museum. But in other directions everything remains to be done; the original materials of our great inventors are being lost, or are being absorbed by foreign institutions.

In regard to time, there is no time like the present. We have still with us Edison, Thompson, Houston, Tesla, one of the Wrights, Alexander Graham Bell, Marconi, and many others whose inventions have revolutionized the mode of living of the entire world, and their original, experimental work should be preserved forever.

We have still with us many of the generals of industry, through whose leadership some of the greatest incorporations have been formed, the men who see visions, who believe in the possibility of higher industrial education. What may we not safely trust to see created eight years from today, if adequate encouragement is given, and if the

materials already secured are properly grouped together, so that they illustrate one another and suggest new and greater developments?

The greatest industrial museum in the world, the Deutsches Museum of Munich erected in 1904, was suggested by a letter of Dr. Oskar von Müller. The work done here recently by representatives of this museum illustrates what valuable material can be assembled by competent investigators. These German delegates took back with them drawings and plans of our most noteworthy engineering triumphs, such as the new aqueduct and the large canal; models of our skyscrapers and subways, of our public library, and much other valuable material, thus supplementing the European material already collected, or to be collected and rounding out the exhibition of the history of invention and of industrial and engineering progress. The German government, the Kingdom of Bavaria, the city of Munich and a private association unite in supporting this museum, and the combination and interaction of these various agencies are most important in rendering the foundation many-sided and vital, freeing it from too bureaucratic a control which might paralyze its energies. No better instance of the advantages of such a combined control can be found than is afforded by the American Museum of Natural History, where the municipal government and private citizens work together in perfect harmony for the purpose of attaining the highest ends and render the institution both scientifically adequate and at the same time practically helpful to our people.

The importance of industrial education as well as of that relating to agriculture and mining will be more fully realized when we study the reports giving the annual returns of the main sources of natural wealth in the United States. While in the year 1909, the principal crops, cereals, hay and forage, cotton, tobacco, and potatoes, were worth $4,422,867,466 and the value of metallic and non-metallic products was $1,886,772,843, the 6,615,046 wage earners engaged in manufacturing added by their labor $8,520,261,000 to the $12,141,791,000 worth of raw or partly manufactured materials they used. The actual value of the product reached the enormous sum of $20,672,052,000. Thus of an annual addition of about $15,000,000,000 to the national wealth, the industrial workers may be credited with 57 per cent. Their skill and success varied much from state to state; while the average was $1290, South Carolina showed the lowest figure, $642, and Arizona the highest, $2586; this exceptionally high rate being due to the large profits from the special industry of copper smelting in this

state. When we consider the great variety of manufactures produced in the Empire State, its citizens have every reason to be proud of the skill of its workmen; an average of $1506 added value for each one of the 1,003,961 wage earners in a total production of $3,369,490,000, is certainly a remarkable testimony to the success with which New York's resources have been developed, and shows us what wonderful results can be expected when greater encouragement and above all better opportunities for instruction are provided for our workers.

With the progress of time there can be no doubt that an ever-increasing proportion of our population will be devoted to industrial work. This is distinctly the lesson taught by the development of the older countries. In France, for instance, more than 12½ per cent of the population is engaged in manufacturing work of one kind or another, while in the United States only 7¼ per cent of the population is so employed.

In one of these museums the fact that water-flows can be regulated by proper reforestation could be illustrated so as to be generally understood, and it could also be shown that when utilized for this purpose waste lands are made to produce valuable results for the nation. If the waste lands within one hundred miles of New York were forested we would not be subject to the bi-yearly scare we at present experience, that the New York water supply is going to be insufficient to supply all needs. The interest yield on the land would mean an increase in thirty years of three times the land value if land were forested.

There would be great mutual advantage in the group of industrial museums proposed, of benefit not only to the public, but also to the management of the museums themselves. Many economies could be practiced which would both reduce the expenses of all the museums and increase their efficiency, as, for instance, in the matter of attendants and policing. The establishment of a central power plant could be gradually extended on the unit system as the various museums were completed, and could be located in a separate structure.

One large assembly hall might do for all the museums, and a half dozen smaller halls would mean that each museum could use them for one or more afternoons or evenings each week for lectures or other purposes.

Advantage would be gained in standardization of necessaries purchased for the proper maintenance of the museums, such as coal, towels, brooms, and a thousand and one other things. These articles could be

purchased in bulk and kept in a central storehouse, and the Museums Association would reap the benefit of this kind of buying. One purchasing agent would probably be able to do the buying for all the museums.

There could be a double system of control: first through the presidents of all of the museums, and secondly, through a board composed of the directors and managers of the different institutions. In this way all the legitimate needs of these foundations would find adequate expression, while there would be a check upon any hasty or ill-considered action, or upon any measures unduly favoring any one of the museums at the expense of another.

The various universities in the city of New York could look upon this group of museums as a kind of auxiliary educational station, not interfering with their activities in any way, but valuable for the collections which are of so much importance to the various branches of study and to the professions taught by them. In other words, this group would be a great encyclopedic set of museums in the interests of higher education for our public schools, and for the entire public.

The following gentlemen may be named as incorporators of the Museum of Peaceful Arts:

Dr. Marston T. Bogart, president of the International Society of Chemical Industry.
Charles A. Coffin, president General Electric Company.
Thomas A. Edison, electrical inventor.
Elbert H. Gary, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the United States Steel Company.
H. A. Hardenberg, architect of the Waldorf-Astoria and Manhattan Hotels.
A. Barton Hepburn, ex-president of the Chamber of Commerce.
Dr. Alex. C. Humphreys, president of the Stevens Institute.
Robert Underwood Johnson, editor of *Century Magazine.*
George F. Kunz, president of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society.
Col. E. D. Meier, past president of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.
Rear-Admiral Robert M. Peary, discoverer of the North Pole.
Calvin W. Rice, secretary of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

Deceased.

Dr. Louis Livingston Seaman, physician and traveller.
Jacob H. Schiff, banker.
Charles M. Schwab, president of the Bethlehem Steel Works.
Melville G. Stone, president of the Associated Press.
Charles H. Strong, president of the City Club.
Hon. John A. Stewart, president of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Peace among English-Speaking Peoples.
Nikola Tesla, electrical inventor.
Henry R. Towne, president of the Merchants Association.
F. A. Vanderlip, president of the First National Bank.

With regard to local support for such a group of museums, every far-seeing merchant is always ready to encourage any institution that will bring visitors to the city. If the sympathy of the merchants is enlisted, the project will surely receive the sympathy of the bankers, as it has already received the sympathy of the student, the professor, and the intelligent leisure class, and it will certainly be approved of by the great army of visitors.

The scientific and technical work illustrated and furthered by these institutions ought to be supplemented in the direction of the physical training of our citizens by the erection of two stadiums, one for summer pastimes and sports, and the other adapted for those appropriate to the winter season.

At a banquet tendered the victorious athletes upon their return from the Stockholm Olympic Games, on Saturday, August 24, 1912, the writer, who was chairman of the Citizen's Committee of Welcome, expressed himself as follows:

"We cannot well deny that our city has so far shown a lack of the spirit of progressiveness in not having already erected a great open-air amphitheatre, or stadium, for public demonstrations. We should have a structure large enough to accommodate at least 100,000 persons, and to contain a track at least half a mile in circumference."

When the larger of these stadiums is completed, invitations should be sent to various parts of the world, inviting participation in an athletic meet similar to the Olympic Games held in Athens, London, and Stockholm, and to the one that is to be held in Berlin in 1916. It would be eminently desirable that this great stadium should be finished by 1915, the date of the opening of the Panama Canal, so that an athletic meet could be held to celebrate that event—either before or after the meet in San Francisco—and also as a feature of the proposed

celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Peace between English-speaking nations of the world.[3]

If the city of New York, directly or through some public benefactor, could have such a structure it would prove of great accessorial value, as, apart from its employment for purely athletic purposes, it could be used for patriotic ceremonies on public holidays, military drills, saengerfests, concerts, horse shows, electric shows, poultry shows, land shows, for the testing of automobiles, bicycles, motorcycles and various kinds of machinery, or, indeed, for any function or purpose requiring large space.

The whole complex series of structures might be erected on the west side of Riverside Drive, between 96th and 110th Streets, and made ground could be obtained by the filling in of the Hudson River with earth and rock from the various subway and other excavations that are constantly being executed. Over and above their accessibility and usefulness they would constitute ornaments for both the river-front and the driveway. The use of this site would prove of service to the Jersey shore as well, for a landing-place could be established on the river with adequate facilities to answer as a distributing centre for passenger traffic between points in New York City, New Jersey, and along the Hudson River, and it could also be utilized by steamers from the Sound and elsewhere, the use of the landing being made entirely free for this purpose. The tunnels beneath the North River, which are sure to be constructed in the near future, would also serve to transport visitors to and from these museums.

A spur of the subway, 96th Street Station, could bring visitors into the building and to Riverside Drive. This spur could lie under the present subway and have an end at the Central Park, tapping all the transit lines, or better still go under the park to the East River waterfront; a great cross-city line. The Y feature of the 96th street Station is like a central heart to three great districts of the city, the Bronx, Van Cortland, and lower New York and Brooklyn.

In making any of these improvements, however, one thing should always be borne in mind, the necessity of preserving intact, as far as possible, the beauties of Riverside Park, one of the great ornaments of our city. Hence the laying of surface tracks and the establishment of

[3] See also "Stadiums Ancient and Modern," by George Frederick Kunz, in Report of American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1911, pp. 413–418, pls. 71 to 73.
"Let us Build a Great Stadium on the Hudson," by George Frederick Kunz, New York *World*, November 17, 1912, Editorial Section.

extensive freight-yards within the boundaries of the park should be avoided. All the requirements of the railroad can be satisfied and the park preserved by placing the tracks under cover, and to this there can be no objection. The successful operation of our subway transporting under comfortable conditions 1,200,000 passengers daily, renders any objection to underground means of transit certainly unreasonable, especially as all trains within the greater metropolis will certainly be and should be operated by electricity. An important consideration in favor of this plan is the fact that it would remove all danger of injury from passing trains to anyone not immediately connected with the operation of the railroad, as only employes of the railroad would be permitted to have access to the subway; moreover this provision would also do away with the petty thieving now possible.

An ideal plan, and a perfectly feasible one, would be to lay the main freight tracks on the Jersey side of the river, where within a comparatively short distance of the river front land can be acquired at a very reasonable cost. Tunnels could then be built across the river at points in a line with St. John's Park, 30th Street, 59th Street, 72d Street, and 130th Street, conveying the freight directly to these distributing points, the main yards to be on the Jersey side.

For a two-track road running from 59th Street to 210th Street, the New York Central Railroad now occupies about thirty acres of ground or forty-five acres for a three-track and sixty acres for a four-track road. And they are much hampered for lack of proper freight yard facilities. It would not cost much to purchase an area of 3,000 or 4,000 acres in the Jersey meadows. This to say nothing of the obligation which ought to rest upon any truly representative corporation, to respect and preserve one of the greatest heritages of New York City, the banks of the noble and beautiful Hudson.

I cannot now help regretting the serious injury that is done to the United States by the fact that its greatest city is not its capital. We have a great metropolitan development, yet all the national bureaus and collections are in a city small in size, easily accessible to but a small part of our population, and rarely visited except upon legislative business—or on a wedding trip. Were all the national collections and buildings gathered together in the great metropolis, New York would be a greater city and the usefulness of the valuable collections now in Washington would be enormously increased. For only a portion of each year does Washington enjoy a period of activity, while the manifold activities of New York as an international station, a commercial center, a center of amusements and fashion continue without interruption throughout the whole year, although it lacks the official and diplomatic circles of the national capital.

New York suffers in this respect from comparison with London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna and many of the greatest cities of Europe, where the metropolis is the national and provincial capital as well. This concentration makes for greater industrial and scientific museum possibilities.

The advantages to be derived from bringing into close touch with, one another the many national societies now organized in our city, such as The Japan Society, The American Scandinavian Society, The Pan-American Society, The German-American Society, The China and Mexico Societies, etc., in an international building serving as headquarters, strongly appeal to the writer, who regards such a foundation as especially appropriate to the approaching celebration of the One Hundred Years of Peace between English-speaking Peoples.

To foster common action on the part of these societies it seems to us that an association formed on the lines of the Federation of the Fine Arts would promise the best results. An international governing board could be constituted, consisting of the presidents and secretaries of the various societies and of three delegates chosen by each one of them. Among the functions of such a body could be the tendering and organization of public receptions to distinguished foreigners who may visit our city, and who would thus gain a better knowledge of the complex and composite character of our American civilization.

There could also be instituted under the auspices and through the influence of the members of the international association, annual exhibitions of pictures, each foreign land contributing from a dozen to twenty pictures. Another most interesting and valuable feature would be an annual exhibition of a similar number of the best books published during the year by the various foreign countries, the selection to be made by competent judges. Other small but frequently recurring international exhibitions of the best products of industry, would help to keep the nations in touch with one another, and would perhaps be more enjoyable to many than the larger and more ambitious expositions.

There could be a unity of purpose as a whole, a pulling together as the fingers of a hand, and yet the same individuals could work with the same independence that the fingers exercise, although part of the

hand. A fine building would be of great benefit, but even without the building there could be much good work done by such a Federation of International Societies and Peace.

After an illustrated lecture on the "Deutsches Museum von Meisterwerken der Naturwissenschaft und Technik," at the Chemists' Club, January 10, 1913, Prof. L. H. Moody, Chairman of the New York Section of the American Chemical Society, appointed the following committee to consider the feasibility of the founding of a Museum of the Chemical Arts that could be embraced as one of the proposed series of museums: George F. Kunz, C. F. Chandler, Allen Rogers, J. B. F. Herreshoff, M. C. Whitaker, S. A. Tucker, H. R. Moody.

After carefully discussing the founding of a Museum of the Mechanical Arts, Dr. Alex. C. Humphreys, President of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, appointed a committee consisting of the following to report upon the subject: E. D. Meier, Chairman; George F. Kunz, Ambrose Swasey, George Mesta, H. J. Reist.

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